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**Testimony in Support of Revised Raised H. B. 7155
An Act Concerning a Professional Assistance Program
for Health Care Professionals**

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Committee on Public Health:

As representatives of the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) we support revised Raised Bill 7155. The CVMA, along with its Health Care Professionals Coalition partners and the Department of Public Health, have together developed the language that constitutes Raised Bill 7155 as attached.

This legislation addresses an urgent need and serves a powerful public health purpose by providing a pathway out of the shadows for impaired health professionals. These professionals are those who, though impaired, have until now practiced with appropriate skill and safety and have not in any way yet harmed a patient but remain undiscovered and untreated. They will remain untreated and unknown until and unless they harm a patient, or they voluntarily step forward to accept the only current option, discipline and public reprobation. In most cases, harm and discovery never occurs and the risk to patients continues. This "Catch-22" must be addressed.

In order to provide motivation and a pathway for impaired health professionals to step forward voluntarily, before any harm occurs, it is essential a program of treatment be created, which includes a reasonable protection for the professional while providing verifiable protection for the public. The program embodied in the revised language of Raised Bill 7155 is exactly that.

In developing this legislation as a Coalition we sought to provide assistance for all health professionals licensed in the State of Connecticut. By doing so, we make a powerful statement that while we will not tolerate harm to patients; we also recognize that health professionals suffer from the same human failings as everyone else.

In this recognition, and through this program, we hope to spare any patient the risk of future harm from an impaired professional. In so doing we better protect the public, assist our health professionals out of crisis and create a program that may become a national model. We urge you to vote favorably on the revised language in Raised Bill 7155.

Thank you.

Eva Ceranowicz DVM, President
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